

Message Text

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44

ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

CIEP-01 FAA-00 L-03 /041 W
----- 047670

O R 281655Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6066

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 1810

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR, ASAF, AFSP, JR

SUBJECT: CIVAIR: AIR MAURITANIE SAFETY

REF: (A) STATE 184328, (B) NOUAKCHOTT 1781

1. I SPENT FORTY MINUTES WITH MINISTER OF STATE FOR NATIONAL ECONOMY, SIDI 'ABDALLAHI, AT NOON JULY 28(AT CONCLUSION OF MORNING SESSION OF BPN) ON UNACCEPTABLE SAFETY POSTURE OF AIR MAURITANIE (AIRM). SUMMARIZED LETTER; HANDED FRENCH AND ENGLISH TEXTS TO MINISTER; AND VOLUNTEERED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS OF DISCUSS DECISION AND BACKGROUND AFTER HE HAD READ WRITTEN PRESENTATION OF PROBLEM. WHEN MINISTER HAD FINISHED LETTER, I MADE SUPPLEMENTARY POINTS OUTLINED PARA 3 REF B. SIDI NOTED DOWN FIGURES ON EXCESSIVE PILOT FLIGHT HOURS. IN ADDITION, I RECOUNTED SECOND INSTANCE OF CONSCIOUS AND KNOWING BREACH OF SAFETY RULES WHICH I LEARNED ABOUT LATE JULY 26 FROM PITTS: ON JULY 16 AIRM FLIGHT OPS AND DC-4 PILOT CHOSE TO IGNORE LIMITED MAINTENANCE RELEASE ("CLEARED ONLY FOR TEST FLIGHT") WHICH HUGHES HAD PLACED ON DC-4 AND HAD RECORDED IN LOG BOOK OF AIRCRAFT. DESPITE LIMITATION, FLIGHT OPS AND PILOT BOARDED PASSENGERS AND TOOK AIRCRAFT OFF ON REGULARLY-SCHEDULED SERVICE.

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2. IN MEASURED RESPONSE, MINISTER RECOGNIZED (A) OUR

PROLONGED EFFORTS TO CALL SAFETY PROBLEM TO ATTENTION OF GIRM AND AIRM AND TO PROMPT THEM TO TAKE CORRECTIVE ACTION; AND (B) OUR REPEATED OFFERS OF ASSISTANCE. HE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR (A) GOODWILL WE HAD SHOWN BY OUR WILLINGNESS TO DELAY DECISION AS LONG AS POSSIBLE, (B) VERY LIMITED CHARACTER OF ACTION WE WERE TAKING, (C) DISCRETION WE HAD SHOWN IN OUR ATTEMPT TO KEEP MATTER A QUIET, BILATERAL AFFAIR, AND (D) REITERATION ONCE AGAIN ORALLY AND IN WRITING OF WILLINGNESS OF USG AND US CIVIL AVIATION INDUSTRY TO HELP GIRM AND AIRM TO SOLVE PROBLEM. MINISTER ASSURED ME HE WOULD PERSONALLY DIG INTO SAFETY PROBLEM AND PRESS FOR PROMPT CORRECTIVE ACTION. HE PLANS TO TAKE UP PROBLEM WITH MINISTER TRANSPORTATION AS SOON AS LATTER RETURNS TOMORROW. (SIDI DECIDED AGAINST RAISING MATTER WITH ACTING MINISTER TODAY IN ORDER TO KEEP KNOWLEDGE OF PROBLEM TO ABSOLUTE MINIMUM IN EFFORT TO AVOID AROUSING FEARS OF FLYING PUBLIC.) 'ABDALLAHI ALSO INDICATED THAT BECAUSE OF IMPORTANCE OF PROBLEM HE INTENDS TO BRIEF PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH IN FULL ON IT AND ON US ACTION. HE CONCLUDED SESSION WITH DECLARATION HE WOULD BE BACK IN TOUCH WITH ME ON SAFETY PROBLEM IN VERY NEAR FUTURE.

3. LONG RECITAL OF HISTORICAL RECORD (BOTH OUR EFFORTS TO FOCUS ATTENTION AND TO PROMPT ACTION, AND REPEATED OFFERS OF ASSISTANCE BY USG AND HUGHES) AND REITERATION OF CONCRETE OFFER OF HELP PAID OFF. SIDI WAS SUBDUED AND SOBER YOUNG MAN. HE DECLARED HE HAD BELIEVED SAFETY BREACHES AND OPERATIONS LAPSES WERE SOLELY RESULT OF INTENSE PRESSURES IMPOSED BY JAN-FEB-MAR MILITARY CRISIS AND WERE THING OF PAST, AND ACKNOWLEDGED HE HAD FAILED ACCORD ADEQUATE WEIGYZT TO SUBSEQUENT WARNINGS BY EMBASSY AND HUGHES. HE WONDERED AROUND WHETHER EXECUTIVE LEVEL OF AIRM WAS PAYING SUFFICIENT ATTENTION TO SAFETY AREA, AND NOTED AIRM HAD LOSHAN AIRCRAFT A FEW DAYS AGO.

4. COPIES OF AS-SIGMHD FRENCH AND ENGLISH TEXTS BEING POUCHED TO AF/W JULY 29. WE ARE GIVING COPIES TO HUGHES AIRWEST HERE, BUT DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO SEND COPIES TO JORGENSEN AND MCMANMON. (HAVE
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JUST LEARNED FROM PITTS THAT LATTER ARE ARRIVING HERE SATURDAY EVENING, JULY 31.)

5. REQUEST DEPARTMENT PROCEED WITH IN-HOUSE OFF-LIMITS NOTICE AND BRIEFING OF AMBASSADOR KOCHMAN. HANDYSIDE

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Message Attributes

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Concepts: AIR SAFETY, CIVIL AVIATION
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Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Unique ID: 00
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Margaret P. Grafeld
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04 MAY 2006

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